



EDUCATION & LOCAL GOV'T IC
SEPTEMBER 13, 2012
Exhibit 10

Education and Local Government Interim Committee
62nd Montana Legislature

FAX (406) 444-3036

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TO: ELG members
FROM: Leanne Kurtz
DATE: August 21, 2012
RE: Chapter 55 Accreditation Standards - Board of Public Education hearing

Yesterday I attended the Board of Public Education hearing on the proposed Chapter 55 Accreditation Standards. Following is a list of the individuals who testified, including the organization the speaker represented and a summary of the testimony as I understood it. The full Board will be provided with the comments and will make a decision on the standards at its September 13 meeting in Wolf Point.

Written comments may be submitted to the Board until 5 p.m. on August 23.

► **Bob Vogel, Montana School Boards Association**

Mr. Vogel provided written testimony (attached) that represents the consensus comments of his organization, along with MEA/MFT, the Montana Rural Education Association, and the School Administrators of Montana.

The groups are requesting changes to the proposed standards in two areas: variance to standards (10.55.604) and teacher evaluation (10.55.701).

The memo provides details on the groups' specific proposals. I included the link to the Superintendent of Public Instruction's proposal in my email message so that you may compare the suggested changes with the language in the proposal.

► **Dave Puyear, Montana Rural Education Association**

Mr. Puyear urged the Board to support the changes provided in the memo, characterizing the groups' proposed changes as a compromise and stating that if the Board does not support the compromise, it will be the "beginning of a tremendous challenge to schools." He said the groups that signed onto the memo reserve the right to discuss their concerns before the legislature and return to the courts if they have to.

► **Marco Ferro, MEA/MFT**

Mr. Ferro said that MEA/MFT supports the changes proposed in the memo.

► **Kirk Miller, School Administrators of Montana**

Mr. Miller said that SAM supports the changes proposed in the memo and added that some members of SAM are concerned with 10.55.704 and 10.55.705, dealing with the

requirements for assignment of administrators and how administrator requirements may be met. Mr. Miller also said some of SAM's members are concerned with the cost of implementing the changes.

► **Larry Fink, Superintendent, Hysham School**

Mr. Fink's primary concern is with 10.55.704, dealing with assignment of administrators. Under the proposed changes, his school, which employs fewer than 14 FTE, would not be required to have a superintendent or principal on staff. He suggested requiring at least a half-time administrator who could spend the other half of the position teaching.

► **Mary Johnson, Superintendent, Browning Schools**

Ms. Johnson is opposed to the changes to 10.55.606, which deals with the accreditation process. Ms. Johnson said she is not opposed to accountability but objects to a process in which accreditation would be withheld from schools whose students may not perform at a certain level. She commented that some of the provisions of the accreditation process are not clear, that questions remain about how it would be implemented and what assessment tool would be used, and that the process would perpetuate the kind of "high-stakes testing" that has proven to be a failure. Ms. Johnson suggested that this proposed change be abandoned entirely, that accountability be based on improvement, and that the provisions of 10.55.601 would suffice for accrediting schools.

► **Wade Johnson, Superintendent, Cut Bank Schools**

Mr. Johnson is opposed to any changes that will impose more regulations with associated duties and responsibilities on teachers and administrators and impose more costs on schools. He said there is no additional time or money to implement new regulations or generate new data, adding that he would not be opposed if funding were provided. Mr. Johnson is also opposed to teacher evaluations becoming public, noting that evaluations are management tools and should not be made available for public consumption.

► **Kevin St. John, Superintendent, Choteau Schools**

Mr. Johnson and the Choteau School Board are opposed to new standards that may limit local control and that will require more of the school's time and resources to implement.

► **Sandy Welch**

Ms. Welch said that best practices are worthy goals but increased red tape and increased costs to schools don't improve student performance. Ms. Welch said she supports the amendments offered by MTSBA, MEA/MFT, MREA, and SAM and she supports local control that ensures schools can do what they need to do to achieve the best performance from their students.

► **Pete Shea, State Coordinator, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**

Mr. Shea said that he is opposed to the changes in 10.55.802, which deals with opportunity and educational equity, unless the changes include "sexual orientation and gender identity and expression". He said schools are obligated to provide safe

environments for their students and in Montana, there is no bullying law or policy mandate. Mr. Shea said adding the words he suggests to 10.55.802 would help fill that gap.

► **Claudette Morton, Montana Small Schools Alliance**

Ms. Morton said she represented the Small Schools Alliance on the Chapter 55 Task Force and she believes the standards are a significant step forward. Ms. Morton said she is a proponent of the changes in their entirety. She noted a minor inconsistency in 10.55.709 and 10.55.710, dealing with library and media services, but supports the Superintendent of Public Instruction's version of 10.55.604 (variance to standards) and 10.55.701 (evaluations) with no amendments.